

SENATOR CATHY OSTEN

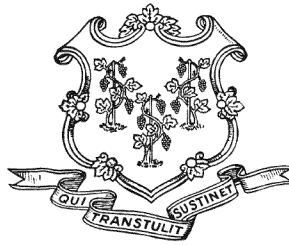
Nineteenth District

Tel. 860-240-0579

Toll-free 1-800-842-1420

Fax 860-240-0023

www.SenatorOsten.cga.ct.gov



State of Connecticut
SENATE

Chair

Planning & Development Committee

Vice Chair

Aging Committee

Member

Labor & Public Employees Committee

Public Safety & Security Committee

Veterans' Affairs Committee

March 14, 2014

Members of the Public Health Committee, I would like to write in favor of Senate Bill 257, An Act Concerning Hepatitis C Testing. This bill would require health care providers to offer Hepatitis C testing to patients born between 1945 and 1965, an age group that is highly susceptible to this disease.

Hepatitis C is a serious liver disease, which is contracted through contact with infected blood. It currently affects over three million people in the United States, many of which do not even know they have it, because there are few symptoms of its early stages. The CDC has estimated that deaths due to Hepatitis C will double or triple in the next ten to fifteen years. Veterans especially are four times more likely to be diagnosed with this disease and thousands die each year from it.

With this one-time test, people will learn of their infection status, and many deaths can be prevented. It will save Connecticut and Connecticut's health care system millions of dollars in health care costs associated with treating this preventable disease if the test is not instituted. I am emphasizing that this test will ultimately save the Connecticut's healthcare system many millions of dollars by treating this disease early on.

Just this month, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services released a Proposed Decision to cover a one-time test for everyone born between 1945 and 1965, and a final decision is expected in June. These new recommendations show that this issue is finally being discussed on the national level. Twelve states are currently discussion similar legislation, and the New York State Legislature passed a bill about it last year.

Thank you for raising this bill, and I hope that you will pass it, as it will help many people, especially veterans, get the health care that they need.